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Thos Paine

THE

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THE
M I R A C L E.

AN
A N T I D O T E

AGAINST
F R E N C H P O I S O N.

——— *Quis furor iste novus ?*
Te quoque magnanima viderunt gentes
Vulnera dirigere, et calamos armare veneno. VIRG.

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M D C C X C I I I .



THE

M I R A C L E, &c.

THIS is the age of miracles.—We have seen a Kessel thanked, a Hastings impeached, men mount into the air, America become an independant state, and France a republic. But the miracle the greatest, the most extraordinary, and the most incredible, is, that there should, at this moment, actually exist men, our fellow-countrymen, who endeavour, by arts the most insidious, by industry the most persevering, to undermine the Constitution, and to overthrow the Government of this great nation, at present, in every respect, undeniably the most happy upon the face of the globe.—Its agriculture, its commerce, its manufactures are flourishing far beyond those of any former period, of any other nation, and are still in a state of the most rapid improvement.—But what is the cause of a prosperity so marked, of a felicity so distinguished? is it not that very Constitution, that very Government? To meditate therefore their destruction appears to me truly

truly miraculous, and more like the work of devils than of men.—At the conduct of France towards us, I am not amazed: France has ever been either our avowed, or our secret enemy. Whenever she saw us in adversity, then was she sure to attack us openly: Now, when she beholds us in prosperity, she is doing it insidiously, and by the means of skulking emissaries, who, gliding into our houses, spread their poison in our families, and at our fire-sides.—She knows, that to disseminate among the lower ranks distrust, and dissatisfaction, and to excite disturbances, is the only chance now left for blasting the prosperity, and for enfeebling the power of this country. Envyng the first, and dreading the last, she seems determined to make every effort to render Britain as distracted, and as miserable, as herself.—But O! my countrymen, let us take a lesson, and an awful one it is, from that, indeed now, most miserable nation. Their old form of government was, I admit, too despotic; and, had the French contented themselves with their first revolution, which gave it something of the mixed form, they might, by gradually improving it, have at last become a great, a happy people. But, mark the effects of a spirit of innovation, when once indulged. Scarce had two years elapsed, when another revolution takes place, under a form entirely different from the first, and which will every day be, by sad experience, found more and more improper for the government of a great and
extensive

extensive country, such as France.—What are already the consequences? Her credit is gone, her money is paper; the loom and the plough stand still, and the only manufacture which now seems to be attended to, is that of constitution-making; and in this, as in their other inventions, its fashion too seems but fleeting, and of short duration.—Under the nose of that very Convention, which was called together, as was said, by the voice of the nation, for the purpose of forming the last constitution, exists another assembly, that of the Jacobines, which publicly finds fault with, and, in many instances, actually over-rules the National one.—What are the inevitable consequences of such confusion?—You have but to open your eyes, you will behold them, but indeed under shapes so horrible, so savage, so abominably disgusting, as must make the contemplation almost unsupportable.—The prisons are crowded with unhappy wretches torn from their fire-sides, without even a form of law.—Soon after, a mock trial is held in these very prisons. A band of executioners surrounds the self-appointed judge. As many prisoners as the room can contain are pushed into it; the trial is short indeed, no defence whatever being permitted,—it consists only of the doom, which scarcely has the judge pronounced, when the executioners rush upon the trembling victims, and stain him and his tribunal with their blood.—Instantly are others dragged forwards, stepping

ping, with difficulty, over the bleeding, and yet palpitating carcases of their friends, and as instantly are they tried and butchered. Nor do these butchers desist, till they are quite exhausted, and, through mere fatigue, unable longer to wield their blunted axes, and with them mangle the bodies of their fellow-citizens.——Massacres there have formerly been in this, and in other countries, but never before was there an instance of a massacre such as this; the others were, in some degree, in confusion, in hot blood; but here, to unheard-of cruelty, is added, in cool blood, the unheard-of, the deliberate insult of a mock trial, by a mock judge.

What then must we think of that government, which could not prevent the commission of such enormities, which durst not punish their perpetrators? What must we think of those who are enthusiastic admirers of such a government, who wish to establish it in this country, upon the ruins of our own?——To those who say, that, in France, such scenes will not again be seen; I answer, what security is there that they will not? They may happen to-morrow.——In that land of boasted liberty, but real anarchy, is there at this moment an individual possessed of any property who, in his heart, thinks either that property, or even his life perfectly secure, or who can place his head upon his pillow, with the confidence and tranquillity of a Briton?——There every man is jealous of the power, the abilities and influence

influence of his neighbour: In the Convention are daily heard denunciations upon denunciations; suspicion, distrust, and cruelty pervade the land.—Such must ever inevitably be the consequences of a constitution, such as that of France.

Their armies have indeed been successful, they have made conquests, though perhaps but temporary, of cities and of countries, the inhabitants of which discontented with their former rulers, met them half way.—But mark, I pray, the end of all this:—The money, with which these armies have been supported, arises from no permanent fund, it was furnished by sales of lands, and effects the property of the church, the crown and unfortunate individuals, and by other devices, in the highest degree unjust, tyrannical and despotic.—When this money is exhausted, and it is supposed to be now nearly so, the consequences will probably be most dreadful.—Dumourier, their principal general finding the difficulty of procuring provisions and other necessaries for his army, has, we see, already begun to write strong letters to the Convention, finding fault with, and even naming some of its leading members; they again, publicly in their speeches, resent such conduct, and retort upon him —The inhabitants in different parts of the country are beginning to rise, they are starving, corn is not to be had.—When therefore the armies return, what must be expected from the arrival of thousands and tens of thousands
of

of hungry, naked and desperate men, with arms in their hands, among their countrymen, who have not bread even for themselves.

Nor does there appear, under a constitution such as theirs, any prospect of a remedy for such calamities. A mild, but steady, and efficient government, the exertions of industry, with regular habits of subordination, founded upon confidence in that government, are and ever will be the sources of national wealth and prosperity ; but, in that unhappy and distracted country, these sources are either choaked or dried up. Such then being the calamitous consequences of a spirit of change in a country, where change might, under proper restrictions, have been for its advantage, have we not a right to be most seriously alarmed at the appearance of any propensity to indulge the same dangerous spirit in this eminently happy country ?

This naturally leads me to make a few observations upon those numerous associations for reform, which we see advertised in every newspaper. The advertisements indeed, in general, apparently confine the views of these associations to two objects, the 1st, is the increasing the number of those who have a right to vote for the election of members of Parliament, the 2d, is the shortening the duration of Parliament.—I must, in the first place, in general observe, that it is very far from being clear, that these very circumstances would not, in fact, be, upon

on the whole, more prejudicial, than advantageous to the community at large. But in the second place I must ask, Are all those associations, are the members of any one of them of one mind, as to the mode of carrying these two objects into execution? No, it is well known that the contrary is the case, no persons are more divided in opinion. Says one associator, such and such persons should have a right to vote, and so long should be the duration of parliaments: No, cries a second, that change would do but little good, such another must be made: Hold, hold, exclaims a third, you both of you speak abominable nonsense, the change and reform, which I have to propose, are entirely different, and the only ones, which can save the country. Let us consider, and consider well, before we open a door to such turbulence and confusion, no man can say where they will end. In times like the present, the smallest change, believe me, is dangerous, more dangerous, than we are perhaps aware of. Such being the case allow me next to ask every man of common sense, considering our present critical situation with regard to the very existence of our invaluable constitution, assailed from within, by French emissaries, by many of our own degenerate countrymen, and, from without, by the public declarations of the convention of France, let me ask, I say, is this a time proper for encouraging meetings, and for making proposals of such a nature? Is not danger, danger the most imminent

minent to be apprehended from them?—Is there one of the leading men of those associations, who does not wish that their several meetings should be attended as numerously as possible, by people of the lower ranks? Is there one of them who can deny, that, the more numerous is such attendance, the more is he flattered? Will the people once roused attend to your nice distinctions? You may say to them, thus far shall you go, and no farther; but will they listen to what you say? Is it not rather to be dreaded that, with minds poisoned by the seditious and inflammatory writings of the enemies of their peace and their happiness, they may make proposals, and insist upon demands, at the nature, and consequences, of which, you yourselves, when too late may shudder?—Are you then, in reality, what you call yourselves, the *Friends* of the people? are you your own *Friends*?—But say you, we have lately added to our resolutions, that we are determined to exert ourselves to the utmost in suppressing all tumult and riot. This exactly resembles a brewer who, while he was mixing hemlock among his malt, should at the same time publicly declare, that he would do every thing in his power to render his beer not prejudicial to the health of his customers.

I repeat it, and I cannot too often repeat it, we are at present a happy, a flourishing people, and our happiness and prosperity are every day increasing. National prosperity is an inestimable blessing, it is
therefore

therefore hardly possible to shew too much anxiety for its preservation. And though to do every thing in their power be the bounden duty of persons of all ranks in society, yet to do so is particularly the interest of those in the lower ones. For in no country, and at no time were there ever so many, so various, and so great opportunities, as there now are, in this country, and at this time, for individuals the most obscure to better their situation, by the exertion either of their industry, or their ingenuity; and, in no other nation is there to be found such perfect security for the enjoyment of what they may so acquire. We have seen Richard Arkwright originally a barber, who shaved for a penny, acquire, by his ingenuity in the invention of cotton-mills, a fortune of nearly half a million. Indeed according to the wild and arbitrary scheme of one* of our new and indefatigable constitution-mongers, this ingenious man would not have been allowed peaceably

* Paine, Rights of Man, part 2d. This dangerous writer is at infinite pains, and indeed shews considerable ingenuity in concealing and gilding his poison. His proposals are of the most artful and inflammatory nature, as apparently founded upon the general and popular principle of taking from the rich, and giving to the poor.—But when maturely considered they will be found equally arbitrary and impracticable. I shall give only two instances, the first is his proposal for progressive taxation. And here it at once occurs that the fortune of every individual must be accurately ascertained. Not to mention the difficulties arising from the fluctuating nature of property, and from many other causes, is it not evident, that the institution
necessary

ably to possess what he had so meritoriously acquired; he would have been told, no man should have so much money, you must give up the half to government. Far different are our mild and equitable laws; whatever a man honestly acquires, he is sure of enjoying, in peace and security, while he lives, and of disposing of it as he pleases before he dies.—The overflowings of such fortunes will always, of themselves, find their way into, and augment the stream of national wealth.

Paine, that arch-foe to the peace, happiness, and constitution of this country, has had the effrontery
to

necessary for carrying such a plan into execution would in fact, be a court vested with powers, the most dangerous and despotic, in short, a court of political inquisition?

Let us next take a view of the inside of his proposed buildings in London, which are to be capable of containing at least *six thousand persons who have no employment, and who are to be there received, without enquiring who or what they are, who are to get food and lodging, in proportion to the work they perform, and who may go and come when they please.* Would not this, in such a place as London, be a licensed rendezvous, an asylum for thieves, pickpockets, robbers, housebreakers, and abandoned miscreants of every sort and sex? One would be bawling, *food for an hour's work*, another, *here for two hours*, and so on; what would be the number and what the nature of the persons who could keep in any order a crew so horrible and so numerous? For I have not a doubt that Mr Paine's apartments would be every day crowded with company.—Such is the plan of this wise and benevolent projector for the *prevention* of vice and wickedness in London.

to tell us, that we are all under a mistake, that we have, in fact, no constitution, and can have none, till we completely destroy every vestige of what we have so long taken, and still continue to take for one, and till the people make a new one:—The wickedness, and I may add, the insanity of this sentiment is, I believe, unparalleled. What is it but endeavouring to sound the alarm to throw this favoured country into confusion the most dreadful and inextricable, to set citizen against citizen, and to deluge it with blood?

We are already in possession of a jewel, for which we have paid a great price; and which, having at last acquired that polish which time alone can give, dazzles, with its lustre, the surrounding nations. Shall we then, in a fit of desperation and madness, throw from us this jewel, and trample it under our feet; while we stoop eagerly to pick up, in its stead, a brittle glass bawble, which would break in our grasp, and cut us to the bone?

To form new theories of government seems to be one of the prevailing fashions of the times. But theory, in a matter so vast, so complicated, and so momentous, is ever to be distrusted. In what we have, from practice and experience, found to be beneficial, we can, with safety, confide.—Upon these principles, so great is my veneration for the constitution of this country, as it now stands, that, were an angel to descend from heaven, and unfold, to our wondering

ing eyes, a scroll containing a constitution new, and entirely different, I will fairly own that I, for one, would hesitate to accept it.

Such, then, being my sentiments, allow me, my fellow-countrymen, to congratulate you upon the escape which, I trust, you have so fortunately made. For, when I consider the unwearied attempts of the enemies of our constitution to instil, into the minds of the common people, a disrespect for, and a desire to rise up against it, by writings most sedulously disseminated not only in every city, town, and village, I may say, in every cottage, but even among regiments and ships of war: When I consider the numerous associations by those who call themselves the Friends of the People, to which the lower ranks, with minds so poisoned, might, with some pretext of order and moderation, have resorted: And, lastly, When I consider that, in spite of all this train of diabolical machination, the general current of the public opinion seems to be set strongly and decisively in expressing an abhorrence of those attempts against our present invaluable Constitution, I own that I exult in the persuasion, that the internal peace and prosperity of this country are fixed upon a foundation, which is not to be shaken either by malevolence or imprudence, upon the good sense of a wise, a generous, and a discerning people, conscious of the happiness they enjoy, and determined to preserve it.

F I N I S.

